

PREVENTING ANIMAL CRUELTY IS A DUTY OF THE STATE

Context

- The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will deliver judgment related to petitions seeking to strike down a Tamil Nadu law which protects Jallikattu by claiming that the bull-taming sport is a cultural heritage of the State and is protected under Article 29 (1) of the Constitution.
- The article underlines that the court's decision related to the case will have a deep bearing on the future of animal rights and safety in India.

Jallikattu

- It is a **bull-taming sport**, usually held during the Pongal season where men compete against each other to hold on to the humps of agitated bulls that are released into an open arena.
- Jallikattu has been known to be practiced during the **Tamil classical period** (400-100 BCE) and references to this sport are also depicted in **Silappadikaram** one of the 5 great epics of Tamil classical period and 2 other ancient literary works like **Kalithogai** and **Malaipadukadaam**.
- Jallikattu displays Tamil culture and showcases the quality of cattle, the breeding skills of cattle rearers, etc. It also signifies the **centrality of cattle in an agrarian economy** in rural Tamil Nadu.

Why ban on Jallikattu is demanded by animal rights activists?

- The practice of Jallikattu has long been contested, with animal rights groups concerned over issues of cruelty to animals as the **bulls are deliberately placed in a terrifying situation**.
- Bulls are also provoked with alcohol, sticks, knives, sickles and even chilli powder in the eyes.
- It also causes death and injuries to both the bulls and human participants.

Indian Constitution on animal rights

- None of the guarantees contained in Part III of the Constitution, which deals with **fundamental rights**, are explicitly conferred on animals.
- **Article 14** (right to equality) and **Article 21** (right to life and personal liberty) are bestowed on persons.

- Until now, we have generally understood “persons” to mean human beings, or, in some cases, associations of human beings, such as corporations, partnerships, trusts, and the like.
- Though some of the **Directive Principles** of State Policy (Part IV) and the **Fundamental Duties** (Part IVA) of the Constitution reflect a responsibility placed on the state and on citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, but these are **unenforceable obligations**.

Questions that need to be answered

- The argument related to **violation of fundamental rights** by the petitioners raise **several allied questions** as follows:
 - Do animals have personhood?
 - Does our idea of justice include a guarantee of animal rights?
 - If not, do we still owe a duty of care towards our fellow creatures?
 - What does that duty entail?
 - How does it balance with other rights guaranteed to human beings?
- The arguments for personhood are based on the belief that animals such as apes, elephants, and whales **share many similarities with humans**.
- However, reading the Constitution as if animals were promised the same rights to life and personal liberty as humans under Article 21 and equality under Article 14 **could have bizarre consequences**.

Conclusion

- Rather than focusing on personhood, a better approach to the debate might be to frame it in terms of our own right to live in a world that treats animals with equal concern.
- It could also be argued that the right to a healthy environment includes the right to animal welfare.
- Thus, the governments would be constitutionally obligated to take measures and legislate to prevent animal cruelty.

WHAT IS DIEBACK DISEASE?

Dieback disease hits neem trees in Telangana again.



About Dieback Disease:

- The dieback disease was **first reported in the country during the 1990s near Dehradun in Uttarakhand**, while it was first noticed in Telangana in 2019.
- The dieback disease is mainly caused by the **fungi Phomopsis azadirachtae**.
- The dieback disease affects **leaves, twigs and the inflorescence of neem trees** of all ages and it causes almost **100% loss of fruit production in severely infected trees**.
- The dieback is a fungal disease but the neem trees are sometimes hit by insect infestation and the combination of both increases its impact.
- The disease posing a threat to the neem trees has been identified as twig blight and dieback disease in Telangana, and it has reappeared in the state this year on a massive scale.
- The appearance of symptoms starts with the **onset of the rainy season** and becomes progressively severe in the later part of the rainy season and early winter.

WHAT IS NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES?

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes recently said that Forest (Conservation) Rules (FCR) 2022 will invariably violate the Forest Rights Act, 2006.



About National Commission for Scheduled Tribes:

- **Established in: 2004.**
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - It was established by amending **Article 338** and inserting a new **Article 338A** in the **Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003**.
 - By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely-
 - **the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and**
 - **the NCST w.e.f. 19 February, 2004.**

What is the composition of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes?

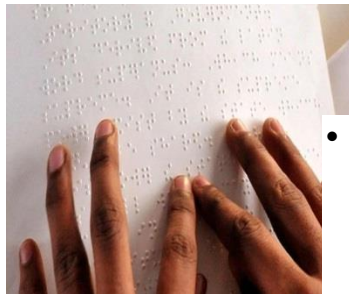
- The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge.
- The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister, and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.

What are the functions of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (Under Clause (5) of Art. 338A)?

- To Monitor safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws;
- To inquire into specific complaints relating to Rights & Safeguards of STs;
- To advise in the Planning Process relating to Socio-economic development of STs;
- To submit report to the President annually and other times on welfare Measures required related to Socio-economic development of STs;
- To discharge such other functions in relation to STs as the President may by rule specify;

WHAT IS WORLD BRAILLE DAY?

World Braille Day is being observed every year on January 4.



About:

- The day commemorates the birth anniversary of **French educator Louis Braille, who invented the Braille language in the year 1809.**
- Louis Braille developed the Braille system by modifying Charles Barbie's Night Write system.
- The first Braille system was published in **1829** - and was adopted by the **National Institute for Blind Youth.**
- It is observed to raise awareness about the importance of Braille as a means of communication in the full realisation of the human rights of the visually impaired and partially sighted people.
- The day was recognised in **2019** by the **United Nations.**

- The Braille system, which is based on a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingertips, has given millions of people who are blind or visually impaired the ability to read and write, and has greatly increased their independence and ability to participate fully in society.
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CENTRALLY PROTECTED MONUMENTS

Recently, The Ministry of Culture reported to Parliament that 50 of India's 3,693 centrally protected monuments were missing.



Why in news?

- The Ministry of Culture mentioned in its report titled 'Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India' which was submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture.

What are Centrally Protected Monuments?

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) 1958 regulates the preservation of monuments and archaeological sites of national importance.
- The Act protects monuments and sites that are **more than 100 years old**, including temples, cemeteries, inscriptions, tombs, forts, palaces, step-wells, rock-cut caves, and even **objects like cannons and mile pillars** that may be of historical significance.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is under the aegis of the **Union Ministry of Culture**, functions under this Act.

What is ASI?

- It was founded in 1861 by a British Army engineer **Alexander Cunningham** who is also known as the '**Father of Indian Archaeology**'.
- It engages in archaeological research and conservation, and protection and preservation of ancient monuments and archaeological sites in the country.
- ASI regulates all archaeological activities conducted in the country through the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act), 1958.

- It also regulates the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, of 1972.
 - ASI has more than 3,693 protected monuments and archaeological sites of National Importance that it protects and preserves.
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WHO WAS RANI VELU NACHIYAR

Recently, The Prime Minister of India paid tributes to Rani Velu Nachiyar on her birth anniversary.



About:

- Rani Velu Nachiyar was born on January 3, 1730, in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu, India.
 - She was the first queen to have ever actively opposed British rule and fought against colonial rulers many years before the Sepoy Mutiny.
 - She is known by Tamils as
 - She was trained in war to match weapons usage, **martial arts like Valari, Silambam** (fighting using the stick), horse riding and archery.
 - She was a scholar in many languages and she had proficiency in languages like **French, English and Urdu**.
 - She married the king of Sivagangai named Muthuvaduganathaperiya Udaiyathevar, with whom she had a daughter. When her husband was killed by British soldiers, she was drawn into battle.
 - **War against the British:** In collaboration with Hyder Ali and Gopala Nayaker, she waged a war against the British and emerged victoriously
 - She granted powers to the Marudu brothers to administer the country in 1780.
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108th INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS

Why in news?

- PM Modi inaugurated the 108th Indian Science Congress (ISC) being held in Nagpur via video conferencing.

- The **focal theme** of this year's ISC is “Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment”.

Indian Science Congress (ISC)

- ISC is a one-of-its-kind event in the country which brings together the scientific communities on a platform for their interaction with students and the general public on matters related to science.
- The event is organized by the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA).
 - ISCA is an independent body functioning with the support of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in the central government.
- Dubbed as the largest gathering of scientists and students in the country, the Science Congress is an annual five-day event from January 3 to 7
- The first session of the Indian Science Congress was held in 1914 at the premises of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

Declining glory of ISC

- In more recent times, the event has attracted attention for all the wrong reasons:
 - lack of serious discussion, the promotion of pseudoscience, outlandish claims by random speakers, and the absence of useful outcomes.
- As a result, several top scientists have advocated the discontinuation of the event, or at least withdrawal of government support.
 - For organising the Science Congress, the government provides an annual grant.
 - Besides this, the government has no role to play in organising the ISC.

News Summary

Key highlights of the speech delivered by PM Modi

- **India’s achievements highlighted**
 - India is now one of the top three countries in the world when it comes to the number of PhD research works and startup ecosystems.
 - The country is now ranked 40th on the Global Innovation Index 2022, up from the 81st rank in 2015.

- He underlined that scientific developments should ultimately make the country Atmanirbhar.
- **Need to increase women's participation:**
 - While highlighting the importance of women's involvement in scientific research, PM Modi said that the increasing participation of women is a reflection of the progress of society and science.
 - Today, the country's thinking is not only that women should be empowered through science, but science should also be empowered with the participation of women.
 - He pointed out that women's participation in extramural research has doubled over the last eight years.
 - India has been given the opportunity to preside over G20. Women-led development is one of the high-priority subjects taken up by the chair.
- **Science must come out of the lab and reach the land**
 - The efforts of Science can bear fruit only when they go from labs to land.
 - With 2023 being declared as the International Year of Millets, India's millets and their use should be further improved with the use of science.
 - He also urged the scientific community to work towards reducing post-harvest losses with the help of biotechnology.
- **Need to focus on energy innovation**
 - He pointed out the need to focus on energy innovation, with energy needs continuing to be on the rise.
 - He endorsed the need for the scientific community to focus on working on a National Hydrogen Mission and stressed the need to manufacture critical equipment like electrolyzers in India to make it a success.
- **National Hydrogen Mission** was launched on India's 75th Independence Day (15th August, 2021).
- The Mission aims to aid the government in meeting its climate targets and making India a green hydrogen hub.
- This will help in meeting the target of production of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030.
- **Other highlights**

- PM Modi stressed on the increasing importance of data gathering and analysis as well as the importance of traditional knowledge alongside modern knowledge.
- He also acknowledged the role of low-cost satellite launch vehicles in the booming space sector in India and pointed to the importance of quantum computing.
- The Prime Minister stressed the need to focus on futuristic ideas and areas where no work is happening anywhere as well as the importance of keeping Artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) as priorities.

ASIAN PACIFIC POSTAL UNION (APPU)

India is set to take over leadership of the Asian Pacific Postal Union after successful elections held during the 13th Congress held in Bangkok.



Why in news?

- Dr Vinaya Prakash Singh, erstwhile Member (Personnel) of, the Postal Services Board will take over the charge of Secretary General of the Union for a tenure of 4 years.

What is APPU?

- Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) is an intergovernmental organization of **32 member countries of the Asian-Pacific region.**
- It is the only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the region, which is a **specialized agency of the United Nations.**
- **Goal:** To extend, facilitate and improve postal relations between member countries and to promote cooperation in the field of postal services.
- As the regional centre for various UPU projects, it also takes the lead in ensuring that all technical and operational projects of the UPU are fulfilled in the region so that the region is integrated into the global postal network in the best possible way.
- The APPU is made up of the three bodies



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- **Congress:** It is the supreme organ of the Union and meets not later than 2 years after the UPU congress
 - **Executive Council:** It comprises all members and meets every year to ensure the work of the union.
 - **APPU Bureau:** It serves as a body for liaison, information, inquiry and training for members.
 - Secretary General leads the activities of the Union and is also the Director of the Asian Pacific Postal College (APPC) which is the largest intergovernmental postal training institute in the region.
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